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SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/WE (MENNUTI), EUR/SCE, PD/ECA (MINER)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [KPAO](#) [KIRF](#) [KPAO](#) [VT](#) [VTPREL](#)

SUBJECT: ADM. JOHNSON/AMB. NICHOLSON BALKAN TRIP FOCUSES ON INTER-RELIGIOUS, INTERETHNIC RECONCILIATION

REF: SIDEREAS/FROWICK EMAIL DECEMBER 23

1. SUMMARY: AT THE INVITATION OF AFSOUTH CINC ADMIRAL JOHNSON, AMBASSADOR NICHOLSON TRAVELED TO THE BALKANS TO MEET WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN BOSNIA AND KOSOVO AND WITH AMBASSADOR BUTLER IN SKOPJE, TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS
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RECONCILIATION EFFORTS IN THE REGION. IN BOSNIA THE DELEGATION MET WITH THE CATHOLIC, MUSLIM AND JEWISH MEMBERS OF THE B-H INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL (IRC) WHO ADMITTED CONTINUING CHALLENGES IN FORGING RECONCILIATION IN BOSNIA; CATHOLIC CARDINAL PULJIC FOCUSED ON NEED FOR REFUGEES TO BE ABLE TO RETURN "WITH DIGNITY." AMBASSADOR NICHOLSON ALSO BROKE AWAY FOR A BRIEF MEETING WITH FRANCISCAN FRIAR DZOLAN TO DISCUSS THE FRANCISCANS' ATTITUDE TOWARD RECONCILIATION. IN KOSOVO, THE DELEGATION VISITED AN EMBASSY VATICAN-SPONSORED PROJECT FOR INTER-ETHNIC RECONCILIATION RUN BY THE SANT'EGIDIO COMMUNITY. CHILDREN STUDYING IN THE "SCHOOL OF PEACE" AT THE PRIZREN ALBANIAN NORMAL SCHOOL DEMONSTRATED AN UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORICAL PHENOMENA SUCH AS THE HOLOCAUST AND THE US CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND CLEARLY ENJOYED EACH OTHER'S COMPANY. THE NEXT STEP IN PRIZREN SHOULD BE TO INCORPORATE SERB CHILDREN IN THE PROGRAM ALONG WITH THE KOSOVAR ALBANIANS AND TURKS AND THE BOSNIACS CURRENTLY INVOLVED. THE TRIP CONCLUDED WITH A LUNCH HOSTED BY COMKFOR LTG MINI, WHO HAS URGED THE CATHOLIC BISHOP OF PRIZREN TO PROMOTE SERB RETURNS AND ASKED EMBASSY VATICAN TO WORK WITH THE USG TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE BISHOP TO DO SO. END SUMMARY.

BOSNIAN INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL: MORE WORK TO DO

2. CINC AFSOUTH ADMIRAL JOHNSON INVITED U.S. AMBASSADOR TO THE HOLY SEE JIM NICHOLSON TO ACCOMPANY HIM ON A TRIP TO THE
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BALKANS DECEMBER 19-20, TO MEET WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS WORKING FOR RECONCILIATION IN BOSNIA, AND TO VISIT AN EMBASSY VATICAN-SPONSORED RECONCILIATION PROJECT IN PRIZREN, YUGOSLAVIA. IN SARAJEVO AMBASSADOR BOND AND EMBASSY SARAJEVO TEAM BRIEFED THE DELEGATION, NOTING THE GOOD PROGRESS THE RELIGIOUS GROUPS HAD MADE IN DRAFTING A LAW ON RELIGIONS (NOTE: OUR VATICAN CONTACTS BELIEVE THIS DRAFT LAW PROVIDES "EXCELLENT GUARANTEES"). BRIEFERS NOTED THAT PROBLEMS AMONG THE MOSTLY CATHOLIC CROATS CONTINUE, WITH THE VATICAN RELUCTANT TO TAKE ON THE MORE NATIONALISTIC ELEMENTS OF ITS OWN CLERGY IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA. THE CROAT COMMUNITY HAS DEVELOPED A "MINORITY COMPLEX" AND THROWS UP ITS OWN OBSTACLES TO CROAT REFUGEE RETURNS BY INSISTING THAT ALL MUNICIPAL SERVICES BE REBUILT BEFORE RETURNS CAN OCCUR. CARDINAL PULJIC HAS GREAT CREDIBILITY FROM WEATHERING THE WAR IN SARAJEVO, BUT HE SHARES THIS "COMPLEX." THE CLERGY NEED TO LET DOWN THEIR GUARD AND TAKE THE LEAD IN PROMOTING INTER-RELIGIOUS RECONCILIATION. KEY MEASURES TO TAKE EARLY ON WOULD BE PROMOTING VISITS TO EACH OTHER'S PLACES OF WORSHIP, AND WORKING TOGETHER ON A SCHOOL CURRICULUM.

3. AMBASSADOR BOND, ADMIRAL JOHNSON, AMBASSADOR NICHOLSON AND STAFF THEN MET WITH THREE OF THE FOUR RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN SARAJEVO -- CATHOLIC CARDINAL PULIC, MUSLIM MUFTI CERIC, AND JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADER DR. JAKOB FINCI. THE SERB ORTHODOX COMMUNITY WAS NOT REPRESENTED BECAUSE METROPOLITAN NIKOLAJ HAD OTHER COMMITMENTS. CERIC EXPRESSED THE GROUP'S GRATITUDE TO THE US FOR HELPING END THE WAR AND BRINGING SECURITY TO BOSNIA. HE WAS POSITIVE ON THE DRAFT LAW ON RELIGIONS, NOTING IT WAS NOW BEFORE THE B-H ASSEMBLY. BOTH CERIC AND FINCI SPOKE FRANKLY ABOUT THE CHALLENGES STILL
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FACING THE IRC, IN PARTICULAR DIFFICULTIES RESTORING PROPERTIES AND DEVELOPING A COMMON PROPOSAL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS. BOTH NOTED BOSNIA'S LONG TRADITION OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AS A SOURCE OF HOPE FOR THE FUTURE EVEN AS THEY DECRIED BOSNIAN POLITICAL LEADERS' DEMAGOGUERY ON RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION. PULJIC SAID THERE WAS NO ALTERNATIVE TO DIALOGUE AND ADMITTED THERE WAS MUCH WORK YET TO BE DONE BEFORE BOSNIA COULD EMBARK ON A PATH TOWARD "EUROPE." PULIC EMPHASIZED, AS PREDICTED, THE NEED

FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND FOR REFUGEES TO BE ABLE TO RETURN TO THEIR ORIGINAL ABODES "NOT AS PAUPERS, BUT WITH DIGNITY." ADMIRAL JOHNSON AND AMBASSADOR BOND AND AMBASSADOR NICHOLSON URGED THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO EXERCISE LEADERSHIP. ALL THREE FOCUSED ON THE NEED FOR THE IRC TO DO MORE OUTSIDE OF SARAJEVO AND TO SHOW THE WORLD AN EXAMPLE OF INTERFAITH RECONCILIATION AND COOPERATION.

14. AMBASSADOR NICHOLSON BROKE AWAY FOR A SHORT MEETING WITH FRANCISCAN FRIAR MIJO DZOLAN, WHO, UNLIKE HIS CROAT FRANCISCAN BROTHERS IN AND AROUND MOSTAR, HAS A STRONG TRACK RECORD OF PROMOTING INTER-ETHNIC UNITY IN BOSNIA. HE BRIEFED US ON HIS LATEST PROJECT -- A COMMUNITY HOUSE WHERE

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ACTION ECA-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AF-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EUR-00	UTED-00	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	DCP-01	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OMB-01	PA-00	PER-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00
	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SS-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00
	T-00	USIE-00	R-00	IIP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00
	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/006W		

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R 301340Z DEC 02
FM AMEMBASSY VATICAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO
AMEMBASSY SKOPJE
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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PEOPLE OF ALL FAITHS AND ETHNICITIES COME TOGETHER TO SHARE THEIR STORIES OF THE WAR, OBTAIN COUNSELING, AND REACH OUT TO OTHERS. DZOLAN TOLD US THIS IS ONE SMALL EXAMPLE OF BOSNIA'S TRADITIONAL TOLERANCE, BUT ONE HE HOPES WILL GROW.

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KOSOVO: RECONCILIATION WITH THE WRONG PARTNERS

15. IN KOSOVO, THE DELEGATION VISITED AN EMBASSY VATICAN-SPONSORED PROJECT FOR INTER-ETHNIC RECONCILIATION RUN BY THE SANT'EGIDIO COMMUNITY. WITH A USD 60,000 GRANT FROM PD/ECA, SANT'EGIDIO (A LAY CATHOLIC COMMUNITY THAT FOCUSES ON DEVELOPMENT AND RECONCILIATION IN AFRICA AND THE BALKANS) DEVELOPED AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM THAT TRAINS TEACHERS AND PROVIDES MATERIALS TO TEACH RECONCILIATION TECHNIQUES. THE CHILDREN STUDYING IN THE "SCHOOL OF PEACE" AT THE PRIZREN NORMAL SCHOOL SANG AND READ THEIR OWN TEXTS, DEMONSTRATING AN UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORICAL PHENOMENA SUCH AS THE HOLOCAUST AND THE U.S. CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. THE CHILDREN CLEARLY ENJOYED EACH OTHER'S COMPANY, OFFERING HOPE FOR THE YOUNG GENERATION TO OVERCOME THEIR PARENTS' HOSTILITY. WE NOTED, HOWEVER, THE ABSENCE OF SERB CHILDREN. PER REF EMAIL, THE NEXT STEP IN PRIZREN SHOULD BE TO INCORPORATE SERB CHILDREN IN THE PROGRAM ALONG WITH THE ALBANIANS, TURKS AND THE BOSNIACS CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN THE PRIZREN NORMAL SCHOOL.

16. THE TRIP CONCLUDED WITH A LUNCH HOSTED BY COMKFOR LTG FABIO MINI FOR ADMIRAL JOHNSON, AMBASSADOR NICHOLSON, AND NATIONAL COMMANDERS FROM THE ITALIAN, FRENCH AND GERMAN KFOR CONTINGENTS. GENERAL MINI HAD VISITED WITH CATHOLIC BISHOP MARKO SOPI (WHOSE APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATION IS CENTERED ON PRIZREN). GENERAL MINI TOLD US HE HAD URGED BISHOP SOPI TO INVOLVE HIMSELF MORE PUBLICLY IN PROMOTING SERB RETURNS. MINI HOPED THAT SOPI WOULD VISIT A SERB ORTHODOX CHURCH OR

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MONASTERY, AS A SYMBOL OF RECONCILIATION, BUT TO NO AVAIL. MINI URGED AMBASSADOR NICHOLSON TO TAKE THIS UP WITH CONTACTS IN THE HOLY SEE. THE AMBASSADOR PLEDGED TO DO SO AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY.

COMMENT

17. AMBASSADOR NICHOLSON/EMBASSY VATICAN WOULD LIKE TO CONVEY OUR GRATITUDE FOR THE OUTSTANDING BRIEFINGS AND SUPPORT OFFERED BY AMBASSADORS BOND AND BUTLER AND THEIR STAFFS, AND BY THE STAFF AT USOP. WE WILL FOLLOW UP WITH THE HOLY SEE TO URGE GREATER ENGAGEMENT TO PROMOTE RECONCILIATION IN BOTH BOSNIA AND KOSOVO. POPE JOHN PAUL II IS PREOCCUPIED WITH A POSSIBLE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS DEVELOPING FROM THE U.S.-LED WAR ON TERRORISM, THUS THE HOLY SEE WILL WANT TO DO EVERYTHING IN ITS POWER TO ENSURE THAT RECONCILIATION MAKES PROGRESS IN THE BALKANS AS A POSITIVE EXAMPLE TO THE WORLD. AS DISCUSSED WITH EMBASSY SARAJEVO AND USOP, WE WILL BROACH WITH THE VATICAN THE POSSIBILITY OF AN OFFICIAL VATICAN DELEGATION TO BOSNIA ATTEND THE OPENING OF A REBUILT MOSQUE AS WELL AS MEANS TO ENERGIZE BISHOP SOPI TO PROMOTE SERB RETURNS IN KOSOVO.
NICHOLSON

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